

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 307581
ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

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DRAFTED BY: IOX/UNA:BJSHARP

APPROVED BY: IO/UNA:AFHOLLOWAY

S/S-O MVKENNEDY

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 307581

EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG FROM UNA

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM JIDDA DTD 26 DEC 1977 QTE

S E C R E T 8824

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA

SUBJECT: SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA

1. NEAR THE END OF MY MEETING ON DEC 24 WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD, HE SAID THAT THE ISSUE OF
THE SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA WOULD BE UPPER
MOST IN THE KING'S AND CROWN PRINCE'S MIND DURING
THEIR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. I REMINDED
HIM THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAD SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT
INTENDED TO GO FORWARD WITH THIS SALE AND THAT THE
SECRETARY HAD EXPRESSED OPTIMISM ABOUT THE REACTION
OF CONGRESS. SAUD THEN SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT
THE PRESIDENT WOULD GIVE POSITIVE ASSURANCE TO THE
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SAG ON THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT AS THIS HAD BECOME
AN EXTREMELY SENSITIVE ISSUE WITHIN THE SAG. HE
SAID THAT THE FAILURE OF U.S. TO GO FORWARD AND
IMPLEMENT THIS PROGRAM WOULD, IN HIS OPINION, BE
"DISASTROUS" TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. HE
REPEATED THE OFF-STATED THEME THAT SAUDI ARABIA
HAD BEEN USG'S BEST AND MOST CONSISTENT ALLY IN THE

MIDEAST. HE THEN ADDED" THIS FRIENDSHIP HAD BEEN PROVED BY THE ADOPTION OF POLICIES WHICH HAD SUBJECTED SAG TO MUCH CRITICISM BOTH INTERNALLY AND WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD." HE ADDED THAT IN VIEW OF SUCH ACTIONS, HE DID NOT SEE HOW THE USG COULD BACK DOWN ON THIS COMMITMENT. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT STATE SPECIFICALLY, HE CLEARLY WAS REFERRING TO THE CARACAS OIL PRICE FREEZE. I HAD JUST DELIVERED TO HIM THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER OF APPRECIATION TO KING KHALID FOR THE SAUDI LEADERSHIP IN BRINGING ABOUT THE FREEZE, SO SAUD'S REFERENCE WAS QUITE CLEAR.

2. HE SAID THAT THE SALE OF AIRCRAFT TO IRAN AND TO THE SUDAN MADE OUR HESITATION ON THE F-15'S EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE SAUDIS TO ACCEPT. HE ASKED THE QUESTION, "WHAT HAS SUDAN EVER DONE OR WHAT WILL IT EVER DO FOR THE U.S.?"

3. COMMENT: HOPEFULLY THE PRESIDENT CAN GIVE DEFINITE ASSURANCES OF HIS INTENTION TO SUBMIT THE PROPOSAL WITHIN A SPECIFIED TIME PERIOD. I RECALL CROWN PRINCE FAHD'S COMMENT TO CODEL DIGGS AND SIMON ON THE SUBJECT OF THE F-15'S THAT "OUR PATIENCE IS PROVERBIAL BUT NOT INEXHAUSTIBLE." PRINCE SULTAN EXPECIALLY HAS BEEN EXTREMELY ITCHY ON THIS SUBJECT AND AN AFFIRMATIVE STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE
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MOST WELCOMED BY ALL OF THE SAG OFFICIALS, PARTICULARLY FAHD, SULTAN AND SAUD.
WED.WEST UNQTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SALES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE307581
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: IOX/UNA:BJSHARP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770482-0445
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771215/aaaaamds.tel
Line Count: 97
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d1580efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 126462
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA
TAGS: MASS, SA
To: USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d1580efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009